

# ***Iowa Outdoors***

**Iowa Department of Natural Resources**  
**[www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov)**

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## **DNR MONITORING WATER LEVELS IN PARKS**

DES MOINES - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources state parks staff is monitoring flooding conditions in parks across the state and updating the information on its website as reports come in. Click on the State Parks link at [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov) for the latest information.

Conditions are changing quickly and much of Iowa has rain in the seven day forecast. If the DNR closes a park, those with campsite, lodge and cabin reservations will receive a full refund. If individuals with reservations cancel due to weather but the park remains open, normal cancellation fees will apply.

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## **DEALING WITH STORM DAMAGED TREES**

Dealing with storm damaged trees involves more than just clean up – it involves personal safety and wise pruning techniques to protect your trees.

“The number one priority in dealing with storm clean up has to be personal

safety,” said Randy Cook, Urban Forester with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources forestry bureau and certified arborist. “Too often people underestimate the danger, whether from fallen power lines to the weight of the branches to the use of chain and pruning saws resulting in dangerous situations that often lead to a trip to the emergency room.”

State foresters are recommending to homeowners with tree damage from the latest round of storms, to make sure no power lines are present in dealing with downed limbs. If power lines are present, stay away and contact your utility company right away.

“If no power lines are present, storm clean up must prioritize getting access to your home, clearing limbs from your car or property using chain saws, pole pruners and pruning saws. In no sense should homeowners climb into a tree, get on a ladder or add additional weight to already damaged limbs to prune. Stay on the ground,” Cook said. “The best advice I can offer when dealing with trees is, if the job requires you to leave the ground or the job is bigger than the equipment you have, contact a professional.

“We also advise people to wear protective clothing from chain saw chaps and hard hats, to leather gloves and eye protection,” he said.

Homeowners should try to protect the branch collars of damaged limbs by using a three step method of undercutting to reduce stress, then removing the weight of the branch and then pruning to protect the branch collars.

“Improper pruning can make a lasting damage to the life of the tree,” he said.

For more information on storm damaged trees, go to your local ISU County Extension Office and request SUL- Managing Storm Damaged Trees or visit <http://www.ag.iastate.edu/departments/forestry/publications/urban.html>.

**For more information, contact Cook at 515-281-5600 or visit the Forestry page on the Iowa DNR’s Website; [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov)**

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## **TAKE A BREAK WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS DURING FREE FISHING WEEKEND**

DES MOINES – As Iowa gears up for Free Fishing Weekend, June 6-8, families can get hooked on the benefits of reducing stress and spending time together while fishing.

“Iowa is home to more than 300 lakes and more than 10,000 miles of fishable streams, providing plenty of fishing opportunities,” says Marion Conover, DNR Fisheries bureau chief. “And for beginners, Free Fishing Weekend could be just the time to learn

more about the sport as the DNR and other organizations host dozens of clinics and events across the state.”

Fishing is a known stress reliever, and spending time outdoors is an excellent way to encourage a healthy lifestyle in your family. In a recent survey conducted by the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, 88 percent of anglers listed “relaxing” as the number one benefit of fishing and 70 percent listed “reduced tension” as the second greatest benefit.

Additionally, a higher percentage of anglers said they had good relationships with their children, are happily married, feel fit and healthy, and are satisfied with life, than the general population.

“When you get a fishing pole in your hand, the only thing to worry about is where to cast and what bait to use,” said Conover. “Everything else can go away for a little while.”

Plenty of opportunities to learn more about fishing and how to hook one on are available across Iowa this weekend, June 6-8, which is Free Fishing Weekend for Iowa residents.

Two major events hosted by the DNR will occur on June 7 at George Wyth State Park in Waterloo, and at Cedar Lake in Cedar Rapids, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Fishing experts will be on hand with suggestions for the best ‘family friendly’ places to fish, equipment and bait recommendations, and more. First 150 visitors get a free hot dog and chips. Everyone receives a goody bag with bobbers, fishing tackle and helpful information. Other major prizes also will be given away.

Other fishing clinics hosted by county conservation boards and other organization will take place in the following counties: Buena Vista, Cerro Gordo, Crawford, Dallas, Davis, Des Moines, Fayette, Hancock, Harrison, Howard, Jasper, Jefferson, Jones, Linn, Lyon, O’Brien, Page, Pottawattamie, Sac, Scott, Story, Taylor, Wapello and Woodbury. A listing of complete details on these clinics and other fishing events can be viewed at: <http://www.iowadnr.com/education/cfshent.html>

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[electronic photo available]

## **WET, COOL SPRING MAY LEAD TO FALL PHEASANT DECLINE DNR WILDLIFE BIOLOGISTS PREDICT POOR SPRING HATCH**

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Although it may still be a few days before hen pheasants bring their newly emerged chicks out into the open, the peak of this year’s hatch is underway.

Good hunts this fall will hinge largely on how birds fare this spring. When it comes finding out how this year's hatch is progressing, there's no better person to ask than DNR Wildlife [Pheasant] Biologist, Todd Bogenschutz.

"In Iowa, it's been awhile since we've had a really great year for pheasant production," said Bogenschutz. "Pheasants endured a long hard winter last year. Snowfall averaged 45-inches statewide. Parts of eastern Iowa were especially hard hit, with places like Dubuque receiving up to 85 inches of snow. Those kinds of extreme weather conditions make it tough for pheasants. In some regions, loss of hens ran high.

"What pheasants really needed this year, was an ideal spring nesting season to make up for those hen losses," said Bogenschutz. "Instead, they received cool temps and the second wettest April in 136 years of record keeping. When it comes to spring nesting conditions, it doesn't get much worse."

Pheasants nesting in the eastern half of the state endured record shattering rainfalls that averaged from 10 to 12 inches during April. May weather patterns showed little improvement. Most other regions of the state also received above average, though less dramatic, spring rainfall. The only nesting bright spot occurred in portions of western Iowa where spring precipitation was just slightly above normal.

The effects of this year's cool temps and extreme rainfalls are further magnified by substantial losses in critical upland nesting habitat. As Conservation Reserve Program [CRP] grasslands are converted to row crop, upland birds will find fewer and fewer places to safely lay and incubate their eggs --- an issue of much greater importance to future pheasant numbers than the immediate, short term impact of inclement weather.

Iowa lost around 230 square miles of CRP grasslands last September. An additional 210 square miles is expected to be lost during September, 2008. Nearly 800 square miles of Iowa CRP grassland is expected to be converted to row crop by 2010. This incredible loss of habitat is the equivalent of a continuous strip of grassland exceeding 2 ½ miles in width stretching completely across the state from Omaha to Davenport.

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*Outdoor Editors:*

*For those who have the space, here's more on this year's spring pheasant hatch. This is the first time we've provided any information on our wildlife computer modeling techniques. This may be of particular interest to younger outdoor readers. LW [electronic photo available]*

## **FOR IOWA PHEASANTS --- IT'S BEEN A LONG HARD YEAR**

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

The ring-necked pheasant is Iowa's most important game bird. Pheasant hunting annually provides our state's residents high quality outdoor recreation, contributes hundreds of millions of dollars to retail sales, and is the number one top reason for nonresidents to visit Iowa.

Local pheasant populations are largely driven by the annual success, or failure, of the spring nesting season, says DNR Wildlife [Pheasant] Biologist, Todd Bogenschutz. If spring weather is warm and dry, birds flourish. But if the nesting season is cool and wet, pheasants decline.

Bogenschutz is the designer of a computer model currently used to predict annual statewide trends in upland bird numbers. To construct his model, Bogenschutz looked at historic weather data [winter snowfall, spring temps and precipitation, etc.] and compared it with the annual, 40-year results of DNR August roadside pheasant surveys. The comparisons showed the model to be a reliable indicator of the direction [trends] pheasant populations would follow. So far [when compared to actual data recorded during annual summer counts] Bogenschutz's model has been accurate for predicting pheasant trends during seven of the past eight years. This spring, following the 10<sup>th</sup> snowiest winter in state history, and two months of abnormally wet and cool weather, it comes as no surprise that the model is predicting an overall decrease in pheasant numbers during 2008.

"For Iowa pheasants, it was a long, tough winter followed by a cold, wet spring," said Bogenschutz. "This was a year when hens really needed an ideal spring nesting season to bring off a good hatch and replace winter losses. Any way you cut it, this wasn't the spring we were looking for.

"The last time [winter/spring] weather conditions were this bad was in 2001," said Bogenschutz. "Following that, our August roadside pheasant counts showed a 60 percent decline. Pheasant counts dropped to an average of just 13 birds per route during the 2001 summer surveys.

"I'm certainly not saying that we'll see that kind of a drop this year, but I am predicting that overall pheasant numbers --- especially in the eastern half of the state --- will be down significantly. We'll just have to wait until August to get the real counts."

To see the results of this year's August roadside game surveys go to:  
<http://www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/app/roadside/>

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## **PEREGRINE FALCON NESTING INCREASES IN IOWA**

DES MOINES - Peregrine falcons have increased their presence in Iowa with peregrine partners and volunteers now reporting 13 peregrine falcon territories in the state, an increase from 12 reported in 2007. A grain elevator silo at McGregor is Iowa's newest site to attract nesting peregrines. A nest box was placed at this site 10 years ago by Bob Anderson with Raptor Resource Project

In Des Moines, three young will be banded at American Republic Insurance building at 601 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. at 10 a.m., on June 4. The public is invited to this banding. A second territory has been established at the state Capitol. Adult peregrines can be observed bringing prey items and feeding young on east side of Capitol.

In Cedar Rapids, Jodeane Cancilla with Macbride Raptor Project banded two young recently at the US Bank building.

At Lansing cliff on the Mississippi River, Bob Anderson of Raptor Resource Project reported a nesting pair. Downstream at a bluff near Waukon Junction, a peregrine pair has again nested successfully with three young to be banded Monday, June 9. This site is on an historic cliff site where peregrines last nested before their demise due to DDT. Also, Anderson reports a new site at McGregor elevator. A smokestack at the ML Kapp power plant in Clinton has attracted a nesting pair for a second year.

In the Quad Cities, there are nesting pairs on the I-80 Bridge near Bettendorf, the MidAmerican Energy headquarters, in Davenport, and on the I-280 Bridge. Four young were banded last week at MidAmerican Energy's Louisa Generating Station. There is a pair nesting on Great River Bridge in Burlington, and at Alliant Energy plant near Chillicothe in Wapello County, a pair is again nesting in box placed on their smokestack.

Of the 12 pairs nesting in 2007, eight successful nestings produced 23 young. Elsewhere in the Midwest, 193 territories had 166 nesting pairs. Of these, 411 young fledged from 148 successful nesting attempts.

The pair nesting at the MidAmerican Energy headquarters in Davenport may be viewed by going to [www.wqad.com](http://www.wqad.com) then clicking on News, then on NewsChannel 8 Falcon Cam. Also a falconcam has been established at American Republic site in Des Moines by going to <http://www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/diversity/falconcam.html>

**For more information, contact Pat Schlarbaum at 515-432-2823.**

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## **BIG PRIZES AT BIG CREEK YOUTH FISHING TOURNAMENT**

POLK CITY - Big Creek Lake will host an Angler – Young Angler panfishing tournament on June 7, sponsored by Brightwell's Boathouse, with the winning team

taking home a new Lund boat, motor and trailer. The tournament is part of the Angler Young Angler program that was founded to cater to child/adult tournament interests. Each team will consist of one adult and two children. The children must be under 18.

The winning team at the Big Creek tournament will also receive a cash prize to attend an international walleye tournament in Kenora, Ontario, on Aug. 16. The winning team from the international competition will receive two vacations for six people. The first vacation is a guided fishing trip to Miminiska, Ontario, and the second vacation is to Walt Disney World, in Orlando, Fla.

**For more information, contact Leslie or Ashley at Brightwell's Boathouse, in Urbandale, at 515-276-0093.**

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## **DNR OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES TO GIVE BACK THIS SUMMER**

DES MOINES — With the official first day of summer quickly approaching, Keepers of the Land, the volunteer program with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), offers many statewide volunteer events and opportunities to help Iowans give back and enjoy summertime fun.

- **Outdoor Journey for Girls Events:** Officials with the DNR's hunter safety program are seeking volunteers and participants for three events aimed at teaching outdoor recreation skills to girls, ages 12-15. Volunteers are needed to act as adult chaperones to accompany and be responsible for a small group of young participants throughout the three-day camp experiences. All meals and accommodations will be provided for volunteers. Events will be held June 11-13 and August 6-8 at Springbrook State Park in Guthrie County and July 15-17 at Hickory Hills Park in Black Hawk County. For more information contact Elizabeth Gull at 515-281-0806, Megan Wisecup at 515-281-7828, or Joli Vollers at 515-281-4075.
- **Campground Host Opportunity:** Officials at state parks throughout the state are seeking volunteers to serve as campground hosts throughout the upcoming camping season. Hosts are offered free on-site camping and assist park staff by greeting campers, answering visitor questions, and completing various maintenance tasks to ensure the camping area is welcoming to the public. State parks currently seeking volunteer hosts include: Green Valley (Union Co), Lacey-Keosauqua (Van Buren Co), Lake Ahquabi (Warren Co), Maquoketa Caves (Jackson Co), Pleasant Creek (Linn Co), and Stephens State Forest (Lucas Co). For more information contact Elizabeth Gull at 515-281-0806.
- **Watercraft Inspections Opportunity:** Officials with the DNR's Fisheries Bureau are seeking volunteers to assist with controlling aquatic invasive species through boater education activities at boating areas throughout the state. This opportunity

starts immediately and ends Sept. 30. For more information contact Kim Bogenschutz or Jason Euchner at 515-432-2823 ext. 103 or 515-432-2823 ext. 118.

- **Park Enhancement Opportunity:** Officials with Lake Darling State Park, near Brighton, are seeking volunteers to remove invasive species, like multiflora rose and shingle oaks, from park woodlands. Hand saws and chainsaws will be provided. This opportunity starts immediately and ends upon project completion. For more information contact Jeff Hildebrand or Merrill Lucas 319-694-2323.

A full listing of volunteer opportunities and events is available at [www.keepersoftheland.org](http://www.keepersoftheland.org).

**For more information, contact Merry Rankin at (515) 281-0878 or [Merry.Rankin@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Merry.Rankin@dnr.iowa.gov)**

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